

# **The Hip-Hopcracy of America**

**By Rodney Robinson**

## **Rationale**

I choose to do this unit because my students view the world through very limited experiences. Due to their economic situations, they can't travel and view the world. Some of my students have never been more than a few blocks from their home. This causes them to view the world through only the eyes of being young and black in America. They feel as if their problems are the worst and are unique to them and their situation.

I want my students to understand by the end of this unit that everyone experiences struggle and trials while pursuing the American Dream just like them. The experience and problems facing them are hard but other groups of Americans experience similar situations and struggle just as much. I want them to understand that a young Mexican teenager faces the same obstacles as they do in America. The Italian experience during the early parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was just as difficult as their experience is today. In the end, I want to inspire them to show they can achieve the American Dream if they just work hard in school and life by showing examples from the past.

## **The Unit**

This unit will be an examination of American Ideas through the expression of the hip hop culture. The unit will be incorporated in my United States/Virginia History class. Students will generate spoken word poetry, street art, and rap music samples based on the ideas of America at the turn of the eighteenth, twentieth, and twenty first century through the eyes of the various immigrant groups that were streaming into America during these time periods.

The students will focus their studies on primary and secondary sources from these time periods. The students will use the experiences in the sources to create hip hop expressions that will help explain the immigrant experience to 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. The students will examine the motivations of these immigrants to come to America, and compare their expectations to the reality they faced when they arrived.

The unit will be taught at three separate points throughout the year with the same theme in U.S. History, Immigration, and the Idea of America. Each time period will be

examined through primary sources available in books and at local libraries and newspapers. Once the students have a general understanding, they will create a hip hop interpretation of the immigrants' thoughts and experiences as they try to survive in America. The purpose of teaching the same unit at three separate points in the year is to allow the students to grow and become better each time they complete the unit. Each unit will have the same rules and design; the only difference is that a different group and the challenges each faced will be examined each time the unit is taught. The three groups of immigrant experiences that will be examined are African-Americans during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Italians during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Mexican immigrants during the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

At the end of the school year, the students will create one final hip hop expression that sums up the experience of all three time periods and immigration in America. The best expressions will be put on display at a poetry jam for school and community members.

### **School Demographics**

I teach at Armstrong High School in Richmond, VA. The majority of my students come from a low socioeconomic background and lives on public assistance. Armstrong high school is the community school for the residents living in the east end of the city of Richmond. The student population is 98% African-American, 1% Caucasian, and 1% other. The school has a poverty rate of 86% among its 1,050 students. The school is going into its second year of federal improvement due to its low graduation rate of 59%. The school has partnered with Edison Learning Company to help improve its graduation rate.

Armstrong High School is the oldest freedman's bureau school in continuous use in the United States. It was started by Union General Samuel Armstrong in 1870. The school population has always been predominantly African-American. Throughout the years, it has been one of the leading high schools for African-Americans in the state of Virginia. It boast famous alumni, such as Douglas L. Wilder, the first elected African-American governor in United States History. However, like most urban school systems, it has fallen victim to urban problems such as crime, drugs, and poverty. In 2004, it merged with John F. Kennedy High School due to declining enrollment in the city schools. Since the merger, the school has suffered from instability in administration, high teacher turnover, and neighborhood gang problems.

The students face all the other problems that come along with this situation such as crime, lack of parental involvement, poverty, drug and sexual abuse. The majority of them come from home environments that are not supportive of learning. Therefore, it is

important that I make my class as exciting and fun as possible to maximize student learning during the 90 minutes the students are in my class, semi-daily.

One advantage I have is that we are in Richmond, VA. I don't think there is a more historic city in the United States. From its role as one of the largest slave trading ports in the world to being the capital of the Confederacy, and to being one of the leading areas in the country against the *Brown V Board of Education* ruling, Richmond has always been a leading U.S. city. My students experience this history everyday on their way to school but do not understand how it has shaped and molded the very neighborhood in which they live. For example, six blocks down the street from the school is St. John's Baptist Church. This is the church where Patrick Henry made his famous "give me liberty or give me death speech". It is also the place where Jefferson Davis was worshipping when Confederate soldiers told him that Grant was about to take over the city. I want my students to actually understand and feel the history they pass on the way to school everyday.

My students are also products of the Hip Hop generation. They understand the world in terms of hip hop expression such as spoken word poetry, rap lyrics, and street art (some call it graffiti). Their clothing, walk, and entertainment are all based on hip hop. These students are the second generation of hip hop culture.

## **Background**

Immigration is the cornerstone of America. Every citizen, except Native Americans, can trace their roots to immigration. Every ethnicity has made the choice to come to America and chase the American Dream except for African-Americans, who were bought here against their will to be free labor for the southern agricultural system. Italian Americans came during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hispanic Americans are the most recent group to make mass migration to America.

### **Africans**

The first Africans landed in America in 1619 in the colony of Jamestown to work as indentured servants to help the newly discovered cash crop of tobacco. There were some accounts of Africans being in the Americas earlier, but this is the first documented time recognized by most scholars. The Africans labored hard in the fields of Jamestown growing tobacco. As time went on the slaves began to take on other forms of labor at Jamestown such as cooks, carpenters, and any jobs that needed to be done at Jamestown.

Webster's defines the term slave as a person held in servitude to the chattel of another, or one that is completely subservient to a dominating tool, or a device directly responsive to another. All three of these definitions apply to Africans because this is the way they

were treated by the ruling white class. Slaves to most owners were pieces of property, not even humans in the eyes of most Southerners. This idea was supported by the Supreme Court in 1857 *Dred Scott V Sanford* case in which Chief Justice Roger Taney wrote that blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his benefit. He was bought and sold and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever profit could be made by it." Other scholars suggest that, "Slave owners had to regard blacks as their inferior- how else could they go calling themselves Christians and professing democracy?..They felt called upon to house, clothe, and feed their slaves only efficiently enough to work (Schneider and Schneider 2007)".

The treatment was harsh, work was tough, and violation of a slave owners order usually led to whippings or other cruelties. "The punishments inflicted on slaves testified to the worse of human nature. Slave owners inflicted not only commonplace beating with lashes designed to hurt but also horrifyingly inventive tortures. They were often tinged with perverted sexuality and sadism" (Schneider and Schneider 2007). Some of these punishments included physical mutilation such as the cutting off of one's foot. Other examples include rape, starvation, castration, and in some cases murder.

The worst thing about slavery was the dismantling of family. "Slave mothers could not count on watching their children grow" (Schneider and Schneider 2007). Slave Jennie Hill recounts "How well I would remember how I would sit in my room with the little ones on my lap and the tears would roll down my cheeks as I ponder the right and wrong of bringing them into this world for? To be slaves and go from morning to night. They couldn't be educated and maybe they couldn't live with their families. They would just be slaves. All the time I wasn't even living with my own husband. He belonged to another man. He had to stay on his farm and I on mine. That wasn't living--that was slavery" (Schneider and Schneider 2007).

Slaves were sold and bought often because slaves represented numerical value more often than they represented a human being. "In the South – slaveholders increasingly regarded their slaves as their major capital – even more so than their land. Few plantation owners or farmers worried about depleting their holdings; with so much new land available...their slaves however were a renewable resource, fresh supplies always available. They were mobile, capable of moving on. What was more, they were a cash crop" (Schneider and Schneider 2007). Slave owners had no regard for human relationships among slaves because their chief concern was economic.

Being sold in a lot of cases was the result of some kind of punishment. Slaves who were resistant or rebellious to the rules of slavery were often the first ones to be sold. At slave auctions, buyers would inspect the slaves for whip marks as a sign of a

rebelliousness which would cause them not to buy. Some slave owners would try to hide these marks to make a quick profit while riding themselves of a problem slave.

Some slaves would mutilate or kill themselves rather than continue being a slave. In the early days of slavery some slaves would commit suicide because they believed upon their death they would be returned to Africa. Slaves would often suffocate themselves, poison themselves, or mutilate themselves to avoid the everyday drudgery of slavery. One slave Lewis Clarke in 1846 told of a friend of his who “took a broad ax, and cut one hand off; then contrived to lift the axe, with his arm pressing it to his body cut off the other hand” (Schneider and Schneider 2007).

### Italians

“Migration was a way of life for Italians throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (Scarpaci 2008). During the years between 1970-1920, nearly 3.5 million Italians choose to leave Italy and settle in America. Limited job and economic opportunities in Italy led to the migration out of the country. “Overpopulation, changes in agricultural tenure and cultivation, plus increased industrialization acted as a stimulus to their departure” (Scarpaci 2008). The American landscape created an opportunity for immigrants from Italy to work in the same businesses and industries that were in Italy. “Laboring in the mines and factories of industrial areas, they provided the artisan skills needed to construct and embellish expanding cities” (Scarpaci 2008).

America could use the skills of these new immigrants and these immigrants desperately needed the opportunity to make some money. Americans often think of their land as a place everyone wanted to be but some Italians did not want to leave Italy. Some Italians “did not want to leave at all. They were sent by their family to shore up (economic) security” (Scarpaci 2008). Most were nervous about leaving their family behind to seek economic opportunities in a new land. A lot of them “longed for the life they left behind and suffered a sense of loss that did not diminish over time” (Scarpaci 2008).

Almost all immigrants from Europe arrived and had their citizenship processed at Ellis Island. Ellis Island was an immigrant processing center in New York City. At Ellis Island, immigrants had to fill out paperwork to get their “green card” for citizenship. The hardest part of citizenship was to pass the physical examination. The physical exam looked for contagious diseases and infirmities. This point created a lot of adversity among Italian families because the family could be broken up if everyone did not pass inspection. One Italian family recalled, “for Maria, the examination went smoothly but not for her youngest sister Rose who was born with a slight limp. Weakened by the long, arduous journey, Rose seemed unfit for entry...While Rose remained in the infirmary, her brothers and sisters stayed at her side. Although impressed by this devotion, port

authorities stood by their decision and ordered Rose to return to the Italian orphanage” (Scarpaci 2008).

The Italians maintained a connection to their homeland and relatives in Italy because “letters and exchange of photos enabled transatlantic communication” (Scarpaci 2008). Most Italians visited home often to share time with relatives and for vacations. Immigrant travel agents frequently sold tickets and created a business for leisure travel to Italy.

Italian immigrants faced a level of discrimination and intimidation in America. Some had trouble maintaining jobs due to this discrimination. In order to keep their job, they had to suffer unfair treatment, low wages, violence and intimidation in America. When word of the problems facing these immigrants got back to Italy, the Italian government got involved to help their native sons assimilate into America. They sent officials to America whose job was to “investigate the treatment of immigrants in America and condemned violence, exploitation, and discrimination” (Scarpaci 2008). They created reports for Italian citizens who were contemplating moving to America. These officials also lobbied the American government for protection for these immigrants. Newspapers in Rome and New York polled Italian immigrants to understand their main concerns. The immigrants listed their main concerns as the “military draft, understanding of the district courts operation (in America), protections of the jobs and the earnings of workers and the teaching of the Italian language” (Scarpaci 2008). The United States Labor Department also requested copies of these polls and reports to help provide protection and fair treatment for immigrants.

Italians survived mainly by moving into neighborhoods of other Italians. These areas became known as ethnic neighborhoods. “Italian immigrants tended to cluster together on the same street, the same section of town or rural area. They filled their homes with the objects they used to work, cook, and recreate” (Scarpaci 2008) that they used back in Italy. The family and neighborhood became the backbone of Italian society in America.

As these neighborhoods began to grow, the problems from back home in Italy arrived on these shores. Due to lack of protection from local law enforcement, the mafia families from Italy were able to infiltrate these neighborhoods. Thugs from Italy saw a chance to move to America and expand their criminal activities. Crime, poverty, and deplorable living conditions became just as much a part of these neighborhoods as the Italian foods and customs that made them a part of America. “Despite the contrasts between old and new, Italians chose the American customs they found useful and ignored the suggestions that threatened to undermine their basic values of family and tradition” (Scarpaci 2008).

### Hispanics

Over 10 million illegal immigrants of Mexican descent have entered America between the years of 1990-2010. These immigrants have made immigration a hot button political issue. This is mainly due to the fact that they have entered the country illegally and are considered a drain on taxpayer resources. Although there are millions of legal immigrants the majority are immigrants risking life and limb for their chance at the American Dream.

The main image associated with illegal immigration in America is of the immigrant sneaking across the border in the middle of the night avoiding border patrols to illegally enter this country. For many immigrants this is a dangerous journey during which they often risk their life for a chance at the American Dream. The University of Houston counted almost 3,000 deaths of immigrants crossing the southern border in the years between 1995-2000. Most researchers agree that number is much higher because most of the bodies “will never be found. The bones of migrants are hidden in the sludge of the Rio Grande and scattered across the open desert” (Martinez 2001).

The journey is an extremely dangerous one for those trying to cross the border. Although most of them make a successful cross, there is still nervousness for the families in Mexico knowing that they have relatives attempting this journey. “Each time a crew of wetbacks heads out on the local bus for the first leg of its journey...(the family) collectively holds its breath and waits on word for a successful crossing—or tragedy” (Martinez 2001).

The reason people are willing to risk their life is the same as the Italians: jobs. “Jobs – typically in hotels and restaurants- along with thousand of seasonal agricultural jobs are filled by a vast pool of illegal, unskilled migrant workers” (Martinez 2001) are the reason for the risks. Jobs in Mexico are hard to come by thanks to a struggling Mexican economy.

The Mexicans call it “la crisis”. La crisis is the state of Mexico that includes streets riddled with crime. The Mexican currency called the peso is continuously falling in value. These events have led to an extremely high crime rate that makes it dangerous to go outside. Political assassinations, corruption, and wars between local drug cartels put the Mexican immigrant in a position of stay and deal with the everyday struggle and misery of life in Mexico or attempt to head for a better future in America.

The American Dream is what these immigrants are chasing. They see opportunity to take care of their families and become upwardly mobile in America. They know it will be full of hard work and hardships, but they are willing to face that struggle. The risk is “an acceptable price to pay for a better future. The future is an American education for his daughter, Yeni, a nice apartment in St. Louis, or perhaps Chicago, a new car for himself” (Martinez 2001) says one Mexican immigrant who wished to cross the border.

Life in America is a very hard life for illegal immigrants. They have to be aware of all law enforcements because they are here illegal. Any incident involving law enforcement could result in them being deported back to Mexico. This results in a permanent underclass of people who are constantly being abused because they have no protection. They are often the victims of crime but can not report it for fear of deportation.

The worse abusers of the illegal immigrants are the employers for which they work. These employers take full advantage of the workers because of their residency status. They pay them low wages and often overcharge for the most basic of amenities. One Mexican named Mario who used to work on a migrant farm in North Carolina recalled “just about everything you earn, you wind up spending. The kid earned about \$700 dollars a month, but a month’s worth (of travel expenses) alone was a hundred dollars. And the Germans (farm owners) would take advantage of us by selling us cans of Coke for two dollars” (Martinez 2001).

He later tells of the day he confronted the farm owner with these allegations. He said, “every Mexican in this field has the right to a fair wage, to decent working conditions, to not be robbed by the company store, and furthermore, every Mexican in this field has the right, if these basic conditions aren’t met, to protest because this is America, and there are laws here, not like Mexico, not like Germany. This is a democracy and Schmidt (farm owner) will treat the men democratically, or else. But after this confrontation, Mario had to leave the farm and return to Mexico because he is an illegal alien and does not have these rights.

Mexicans in America also face various types of discrimination. The new Arizona immigration law is a prime example of what they have to face. All Mexican immigrants are racially profiled on a consistent basis. They have to carry residency status papers with them at all times or get arrested. This is reminiscent of the days of slavery when free blacks had to carry their freedom papers with them at all times. Some Mexicans avoid communication with white people while in America because of the problems with racism that they have faced. A young Mexican immigrant named Alphonso said “I have never had a white friend...(they) bunch of racists” (Martinez 2001).

Raul Tapia, a Mexican immigrant who lives in Arkansas with his family resents the idea that immigrants a drain on America’s resources. He says “Those people who think immigrants are a drain on the economy are confused...I own a house, pay taxes. I have a city job and the government gets taxes from that, too. We have the cars and pay insurance on them. We buy appliances, we buy groceries. What more does it take to be American?” (Martinez 2001).

### Hip Hop Expressions



Hip Hop started in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Depending on whom you ask, it got its start in the South Bronx or Harlem area of New York City. Each neighborhood claims to be the home of hip-hop. The early days of hip hop were a vocal expression of the plight of young urban black youths and their everyday struggles. These struggles included racial oppression, police brutality, and poverty in the inner city. It was mainly rejected by the mainstream as a form of expression, but over time became accepted.

Hip Hop involves several forms of expression. The first and most common is rap music. Rap music is a form of music that incorporates dance beats with rhythmic lyrical rhyming. It has involved from the simple one syllable rhymes of the Sugar Hill Gang, to the lyrical complexities of artists such as Nas. Over the years, it has been the leading voice for young black people and has ignited many controversies with its topics and lyrics. Rap Music made it to the Supreme Court in the mid 1980's, when the group 2 Live Crew won a 1<sup>st</sup> amendment case against the state of Florida for trying to censor their music; a landmark case in the world of entertainment.

Another form of hip hop expression is street art. Most people refer to it as graffiti because they do not understand it. Most street artists will tell you it's the purest form of art because it is pure raw self expression. The earliest street art was noticed on the subway trains and walls of the Bronx. A simple mural of a friend who is dead can be defined as street art. Tagging is the name given to the art of putting your name or symbol on public property. Street Artists have been the scorn of public officials who claim it is graffiti that marks up the streets and is an eyesore to the community.

The last form of hip hop expression that will be focused on in this unit is slam poetry. Slam poetry is the newest form of hip hop self expression. It combines the basic artistry of poems with a vibrant theatrical oral reading of the poem that is subject to interpretation by the audience. This style of poetry started in Chicago in the late 1980's and has spread nation wide since its inception. Just like other forms of hip hop, it was widely scorned in popular culture and literary circles when it first started. However, it has continued to grow in popularity and there have been several HBO programs dedicated to the performers of slam poetry. Shows like Russell Simmons Def Poetry Jam and Freedom Expression Poetry Competition has introduced slam poetry to a new audience and has made it the voice of the young generation.

### Common Themes

All these groups have faced numerous tests of faith and dedication while pursuing the American Dream. The American Dream is to live comfortably through hard work while providing the next generation of your family with opportunities to live a better life than you did. It's been the attraction since the first settlers arrived at Jamestown in 1607 pursuing the riches and gold in the New World. Upward mobility is one of the goals of

every person in the world and America provides you with the best chance of any country around the globe.

These immigrant groups have all come to America at different times but their paths to immigration and citizenship are very similar. There are common themes among all three groups of immigrants, which are jobs, discrimination, and abuse. African-Americans came to America forcibly, to work the tobacco and cotton plantations of the colonial south. Italian immigrants came to work the mines and construction jobs in the urban northern and mid western cities. Mexicans come to America to work in the agriculture industry. These jobs are low pay with little job security. The employees often face abuse and oppression by their employers.

The African-American experience is much different than the others because they were bought to this country as slaves and had no rights in the American system of law. Even the American Constitution only called Africans 3/5 of a human being. Once freed from the institution of slavery, African-Americans had to deal with discrimination, murder, and abuse for another 100 years before they were given full rights of American citizens.

Italian Americans were not slaves but they faced discrimination, murder, and abuse at the hands of American employers and those Americans who did not welcome their immigration into America. The most known example was the Sacco and Vanzetti case of two Italian Immigrants who were convicted of murder despite a lack of credible evidence. Many people believe their convictions were the result of immigrant discrimination or xenophobia.

Mexican Americans are the newest group to immigrate to America to face the same problems of discrimination, abuse, and murder by American employers and those who do not want them here. The illegal immigrant debate has split the country and has become a hot button political issue that has caused some politicians their job.

### **Strategies**

History education in this country lags far behind the other subjects because of the old and archaic methods a lot of history teachers are still using. A lot of history teachers still use lecture as the main teaching method. Studies show that after two weeks, students only remember 5% of what they learned through the lecture method. More importantly, lecture creates an environment that is incredibly boring to the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. 21<sup>st</sup> century learners are the technological generation. They have access to tons of videos, knowledge, and all of the social networking that technology has created. It's hard for that type of learner to be involved in mainly lecture methodologies.

Another problem with history education today is the reliance on textbooks. Textbooks are tools of information that force opinions and ideas about the past that is mainly at the author's discretion. This does not allow the student to learn any critical thinking or problem solving skills that are very important to the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner. This once again leads to a generation of history students who are uninterested in history class. The unit I am planning is going to be a fun, interactive unit that allows the students to question and form opinions about various people and topics in history.

Students will analyze primary sources from three different areas. They will keep graphic organizers that will allow them to focus on several key topics as we analyze documents from different areas. These key topics are

1. What is citizenship?
2. What is freedom?
3. What is the American Dream?

They will make a new list for every immigrant group studies throughout the year. They will compare and contrast the experiences as each group pursues the American Dream focusing on these questions and the political, social, and economic barriers in the way of those immigrants trying to achieve the American Dream. They will use the graphic organizers as sources when they create a hip hop interpretation of each of the major questions and what it meant to the immigrant group being studied.

## **Lesson Plans**

### **African Americans**

This part of the unit will take place over two days in two 90 minute class blocks. The objective is for the students to learn the physical and mental tolls of slavery. The activity requires some in class reading but also some out of class reading. Each student should receive two concept maps for the following concepts: freedom, citizenship, American Dream, and Democracy (Appendix 2). The pre-assignment for day 1 includes the student reading the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. When students get to class, they will be divided into small groups of 2-4 people. The groups will be then given one excerpt to read from *David Walker's Appeal to End Slavery*, *Harriet Jacob Myers Diary of A Slave a Girl*, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglas*, and *Toqueville's Democracy in America* and a concept map for each term. The students will then fill out the concept maps using the think-pair-share model for group work. After thirty minutes of working, each group will share their concept maps on the smart board with the rest of the class.

The teacher will begin day 2 of the lesson by presenting a blank concept map on the smart board and asking the students to give examples to fill in the map. After the teacher

fills in the map with the students' answers, they will then show spoken word art clips from youtube of the *Defpoets* and other spoken word artists discussing the subject of black in America. The teacher and students will then observe several pictures from *A Pictorial History of the Negro in America*. The students will then be asked to create their own hip hop interpretation of the ideas discussed in the concept maps. Using the information from the past two classes and using the information from the graphic organizer, students must write a rap, spoken word poem, or artistic expression of what the concepts of freedom, citizenship, and the American Dream meant to African American immigrants in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Students must perform their rap or spoken word poem in front of the class. Students who choose to create artwork must display and explain their artwork in front of the class.

### Italian Americans

This part of the unit will take place over two days in two 90 minute class blocks. The objective is for students to learn about the Italian Experience as they immigrated into America during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each student should receive two concept maps for the following concepts: freedom, citizenship, American Dream, and Democracy (Appendix 2). The pre-assignment for day 1 includes the student reading the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. When students get to class they will be divided into small groups of 2-4 people. The groups will be then given one chapter to read from *The Journal of Italians in America* and a concept map for each term. One group will be assigned the introduction from *How the Other Half Lives*. The students will then fill out the concept maps using the think-pair-share model for group work. After thirty minutes of working, each group will share their concept maps on their chapter on the smart board with the rest of the class.

The teacher will begin day 2 of the lesson by showing clips from the movie the Godfather part 2. The teacher will present a blank concept map on the smart board and asking the students to give examples to fill in the map using the knowledge from the previous two class periods. The students will then be asked to create their own hip hop interpretation of the ideas discussed in the concept maps. Using the information from the past two classes and using the information from the graphic organizer, students must write a rap, spoken word poem, or artistic expression of what the concepts of freedom, citizenship, and the American Dream meant to Italian Immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Students must perform their rap or spoken word poem in front of the class. Students who choose to create artwork must display and explain their artwork in front of the class. The purpose of repetition is for students to improve the quality of the assignment each time they do it after constructive feedback from the teacher.

### Mexican Americans

This part of the unit will take place over two days in two 90 minute class blocks. The objective is for students to learn about the Mexican Experience as they immigrate into American during the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>th</sup> century. Each student should receive two concept maps for the following concepts: freedom, citizenship, American Dream, and Democracy (Appendix 2). When students get to class they will be divided into small groups of 2-4 people. The groups will be then given one chapter to read from *Crossing Over* or *New Americans* and a concept map for each term. The students will then fill out the concept maps using the think-pair-share model for group work. After thirty minutes of working, each group will share their concept maps on their chapter on the smart board with the rest of the class.

The teacher will begin day 2 of the lesson by showing clips from the movie *Which Way Home*, an HBO Documentary of Illegal Immigration. The teacher will present a blank concept map on the smart board and asking the students to give examples to fill in the map using the knowledge from the previous two class periods. The students will then be asked to create their own hip hop interpretation of the ideas discussed in the concept maps. Using the information from the past two classes and using the information from the graphic organizer, students must write a rap, spoken word poem, or artistic expression of what the concepts of freedom, citizenship, and the American Dream meant to Mexican Immigrants in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students must perform their rap or spoken word poem in front of the class. Students who choose to create artwork must display and explain their artwork in front of the class. The purpose of repetition is for students to improve the quality of the assignment each time they do it after constructive feedback from the teacher.

## **Appendix**

Examples of hip hop expression that can be found on youtube.com

"America" by Nas

"Def Poets"

"Def Poetry Jam"

## **Local Standards**

### **US History 11**

- VUS.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis and responsible citizenship, including the ability to
- identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary source documents, records, and data, including artifacts, diaries, letters, photographs, journals, newspapers, historical accounts, and art, to increase understanding of events and life in the United States;
  - evaluate the authenticity, authority, and credibility of sources;
  - formulate historical questions and defend findings, based on inquiry and interpretation;
  - develop perspectives of time and place, including the construction of maps and various timelines of events, periods, and personalities in American history;
  - communicate findings orally and in analytical essays or comprehensive papers;
  - develop skills in discussion, debate, and persuasive writing with respect to enduring issues and determine how divergent viewpoints have been addressed and reconciled;
  - apply geographic skills and reference sources to understand how relationships between humans and their environment have changed over time;
  - interpret the significance of excerpts from famous speeches and other documents;
  - identify the costs and benefits of specific choices made, including the consequences, both intended and unintended, of the decisions and how people and nations responded to positive and negative incentives.
- VUS.2 The student will describe how early European exploration and colonization resulted in cultural interactions among Europeans, Africans, and American Indians.
- VUS.3 The student will describe how the values and institutions of European economic and political life took root in the colonies and how slavery reshaped European and African life in the Americas.
- VUS.5 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the issues involved in the creation and ratification of the Constitution of the United States and how the principles of limited government, consent of the governed, and the social contract are embodied in it by
- explaining the origins of the Constitution, including the Articles of Confederation;

- b) identifying the major compromises necessary to produce the Constitution, and the roles of James Madison and George Washington;
- c) examining the significance of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom in the framing of the Bill of Rights;
- d) assessing the arguments of Federalists and Anti-Federalists during the ratification debates and their relevance to political debate today;
- e) appraising how John Marshall's precedent-setting decisions established the Supreme Court as an independent and equal branch of the national government.

- VUS.8 The student will demonstrate knowledge of how the nation grew and changed from the end of Reconstruction through the early twentieth century by
- a) explaining the relationship among territorial expansion, westward movement of the population, new immigration, growth of cities, the role of the railroads, and the admission of new states to the United States;
  - b) describing the transformation of the American economy from a primarily agrarian to a modern industrial economy and identifying major inventions that improved life in the United States;
  - c) analyzing prejudice and discrimination during this time period, with emphasis on "Jim Crow" and the responses of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois;
  - d) identifying the causes and impact of the Progressive Movement, including the excesses of the Gilded Age, child labor and antitrust laws, the rise of labor unions, and the success of the women's suffrage movement.
- VUS.15 The student will demonstrate knowledge of economic, social, cultural, and political developments in recent decades and today by
- a) examining the role the United States Supreme Court has played in defining a constitutional right to privacy, affirming equal rights, and upholding the rule of law;
  - b) analyzing the changing patterns of immigration, the reasons new immigrants choose to come to this country, their contributions to contemporary America, and the debates over immigration policy;

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## **Appendix 2 – Graphic Ogranizers**

Dictionary:

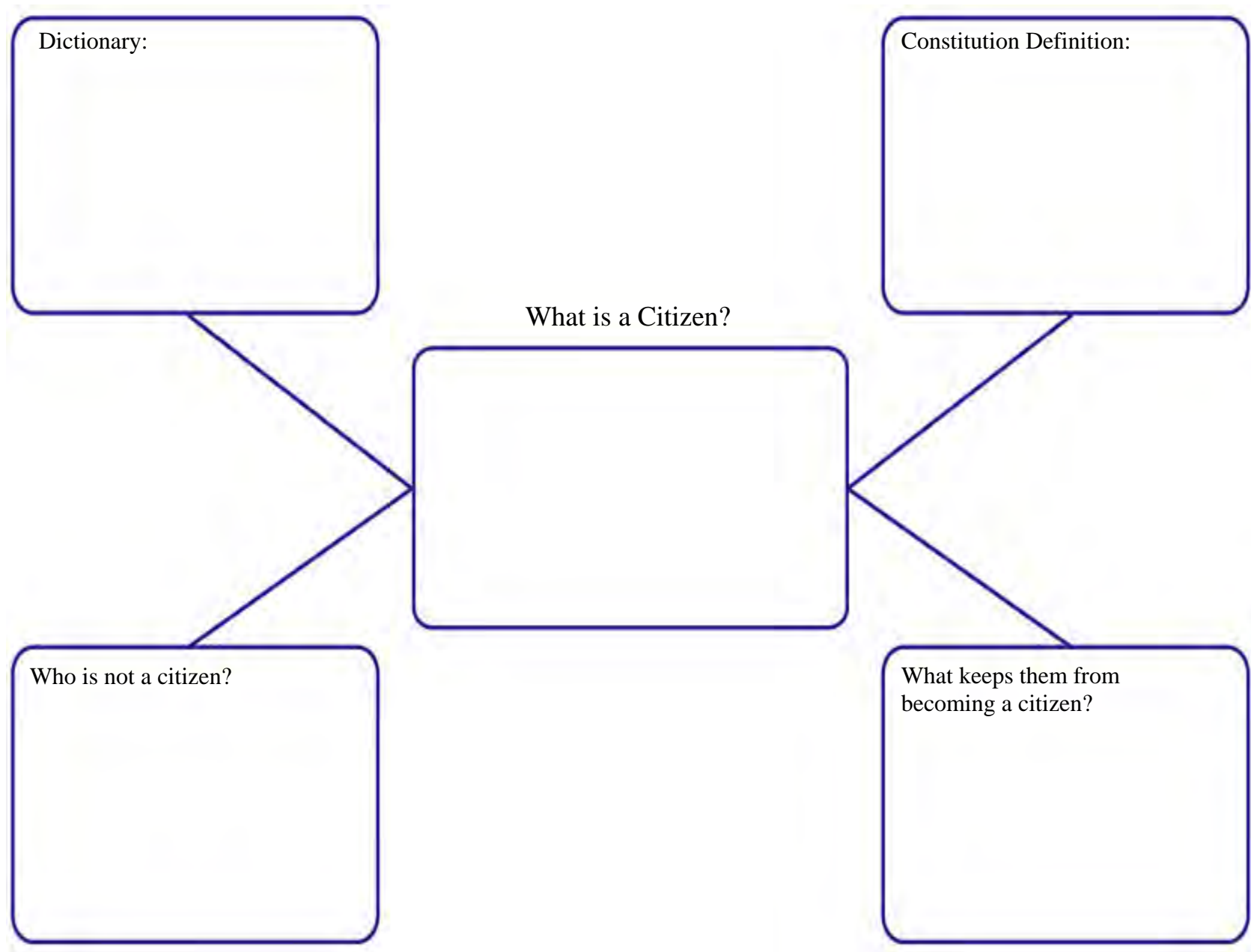
Your Definition:

What is Freedom?

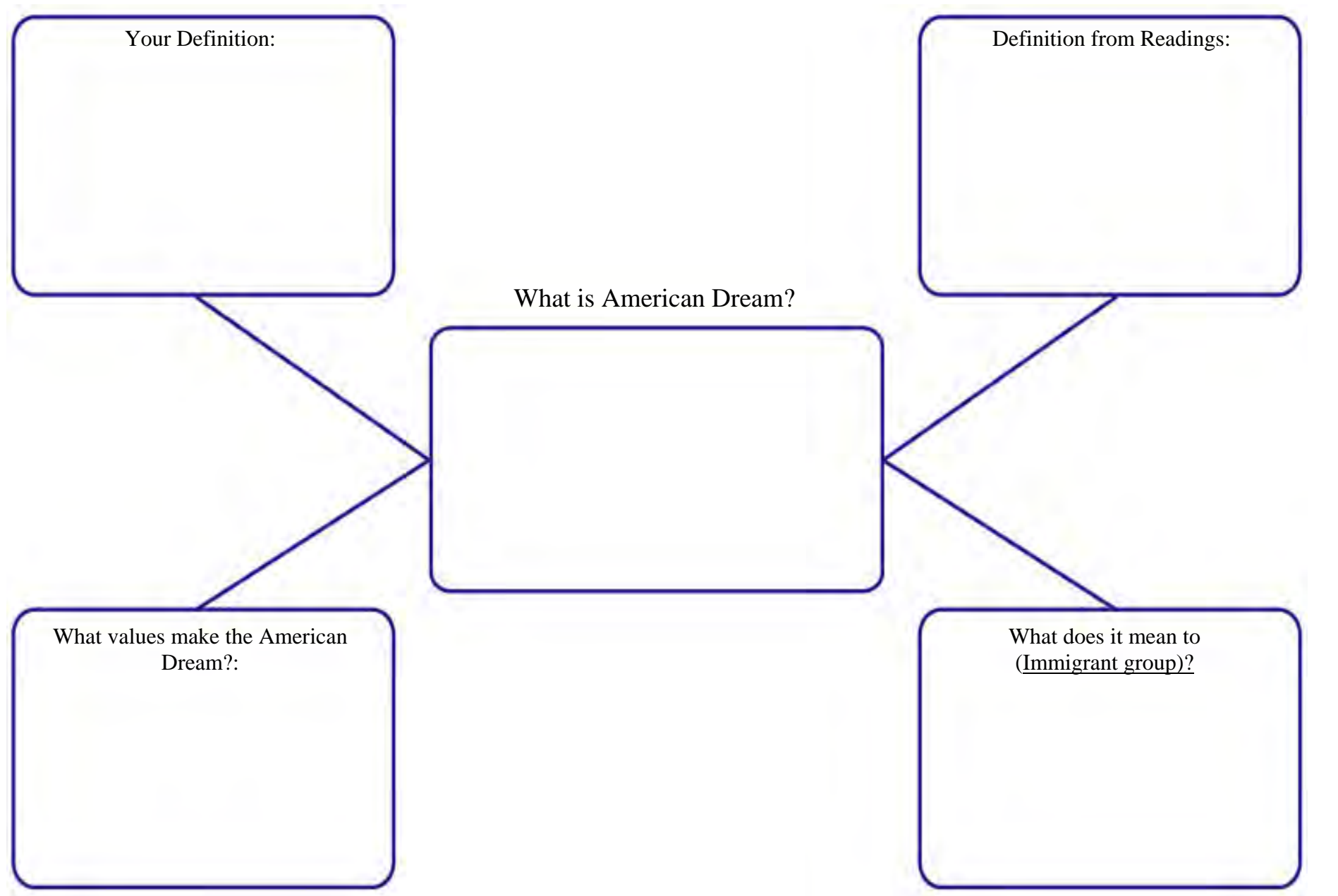
Concepts of Freedom:

What does it mean to  
(Immigrant group)?

Name\_\_\_\_\_

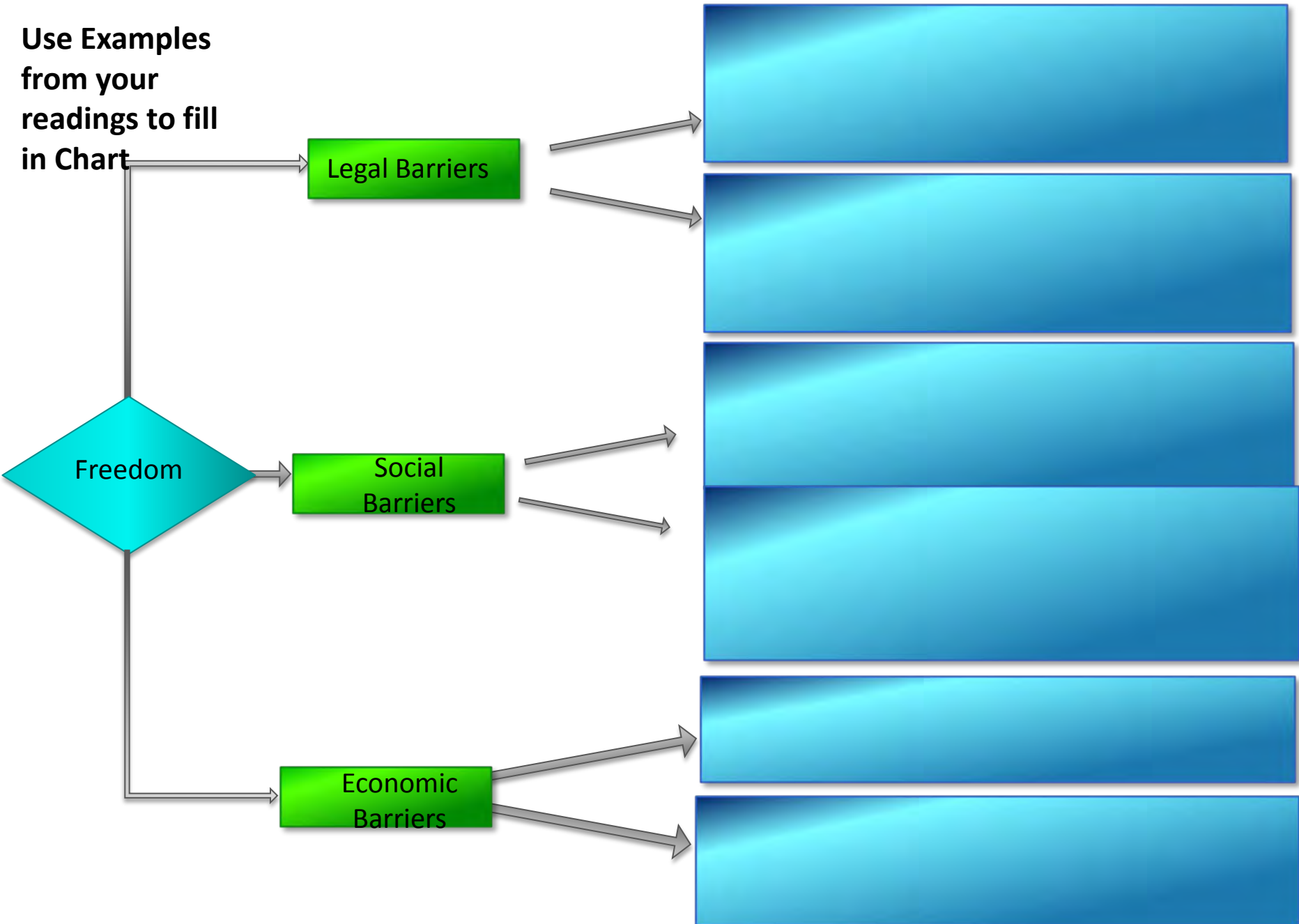


Name\_\_\_\_\_

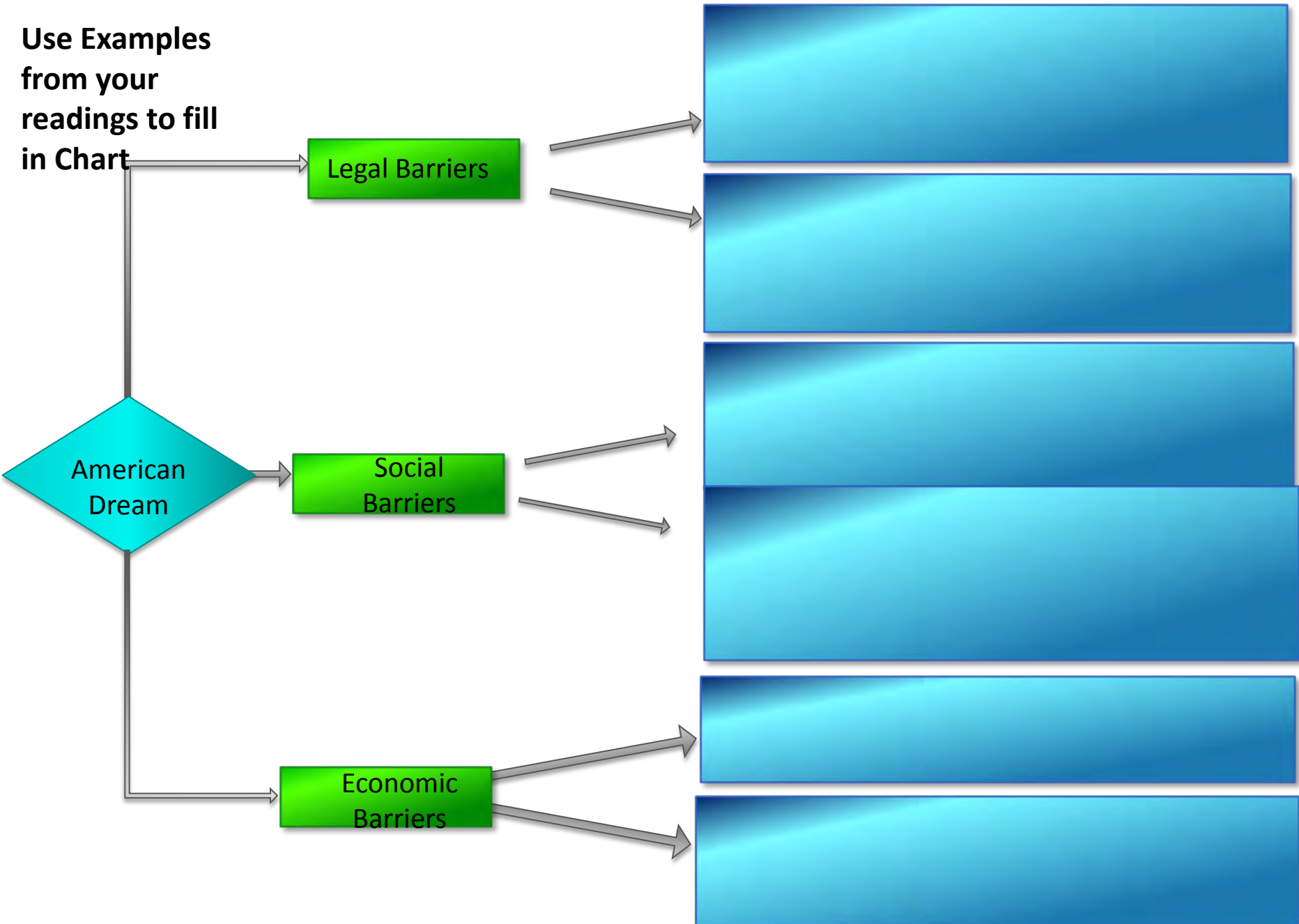


Name\_\_\_\_\_

Use Examples  
from your  
readings to fill  
in Chart



Use Examples  
from your  
readings to fill  
in Chart



Use Examples  
from your  
readings to fill  
in Chart

